Ranking Member HALL, and my good friend Dr. BAIRD for bringing H.R. 1867, the National Science Foundation Reauthorization Act, to the floor. This is a very important bill that will benefit our young scientists for generations to come.

I would also like to thank some of my colleagues, Ms. GIFFORDS and Mr. CROWLEY, for their support.

My amendment makes a needed change to H.R. 1867 by allowing the Director of the National Science Foundation to establish a competitive, merit-based program to award grants to Hispanic-serving institutions for science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM education.

The U.S. is in danger of falling behind the rest of our competitors in the world in STEM education, and it is imperative that we improve academics in this country. We need initiatives that increase educational opportunities for all young adults in order to expand the number of students who pursue careers in science and math-related fields.

The National Academy of Science's study, Rising Above the Gathering Storm, paints a very sobering picture of our future if we continue to see declines in both the quality and the quantity of science and math students. However, we can alter this current trend by expanding options for our children.

The House has passed numerous bills in recent weeks to create new opportunities in STEM education. These are excellent first steps. Likewise, today's legislation, and my amendment, provide us with the building blocks for academic progress. We should continue working hard to improve access to education and offer better services for our students and families.

This amendment does that by allowing Hispanic-serving institutions throughout the country to participate in NSF programs. As the largest minority group in the United States, Hispanic populations should be encouraged to access the educational fields where we need the most talent, in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

At San Joaquin Delta College in my district, and at hundreds of similar 2- and 4-year institutions, students benefit from existing funds and programs that will be enhanced by the adoption of this amendment.

We should give the NSF the ability to support improvement of curriculum and courses at Hispanic-serving institutions, while also providing for faculty development initiatives that will lead to better-educated students.

In addition to the benefits of these changes, my amendment is fiscally responsible. It authorizes no new funding. It simply provides the opportunity for Hispanic-serving institutions to compete for NSF funds in the same way as other institutions.

The NSF already supports similar programs for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges, and this amendment will allow Hispanic-serving institutions to better serve our future leaders and scientists.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

Ms. GIFFORDS. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to speak in support of the McNerney-Giffords-Crowley amendment to the National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 2007.

I want to thank Congressman MCNERNEY and Congressman CROWLEY for their help in crafting this amendment. It has been a pleasure to work with both of them.

A Hispanic-serving institution is defined as an institution of higher education that has at least 25 percent Hispanic full-time enrollment, and at least 50 percent of the school's student population must be eligible for need-based financial aid.

This amendment will establish a new program in the National Science Foundation to award grants to Hispanic-serving institutions on a competitive, merit-reviewed basis. These grants will enhance the quality of undergraduate science, math, engineering and technology education. This will increase student retention and graduation rates for those students pursuing degrees in these critical areas.

Specifically, this grant program will support faculty development, which is critical; stipends for undergraduate students participating in research; and initiatives to improve courses and curriculum in science, math and engineering and technology.

In 2005, Mr. Chairman, a group of bipartisan congressional lawmakers asked the experts at the National Academies for steps that policymakers must pursue in order to ensure the United States remains globally competitive.

Their report, entitled Rising Above the Gathering Storm, which we refer to frequently on the Science Committee, found that the United States will stand to lose in terms of global competitiveness unless we act immediately.

One of the recommendations was to increase the participation of minorities in STEM education fields. That report stated that ''increasing participation of underrepresented minorities is critical to ensuring a high-quality supply of scientists and engineers in the United States over the long term. And as minority groups increase in percentage within the United States population, increasing their participation in those STEM fields is critical.''

In my home State of Arizona, 50 percent of the population 18 years of age and younger are Hispanic. My amendment will ensure that Hispanics, our Nation's largest ethnic minority, and many blacks, whites, Asians and Native Americans who attend Hispanic-serving institutions will be able to more fully contribute to American innovation. It will expand the number of students graduating with the credentials to enter the critical fields that impact American competitiveness, those STEM fields.

This amendment truly benefits all of the United States of America.

In my district I have three Hispanic-serving institutions, Pima Community College, Cochise Community College and, of course, the University of Arizona South. All three of these institutions support this amendment which would give them the opportunity to improve their STEM education programs.

Dr. Karen Nicodemus, who is the president of Cochise College, told my office, ''As President of a rural Hispanic-serving institution, I applaud and strongly support any and all efforts to fund and expand undergraduate student access to the STEM areas. Directing resources to a growing but historically underserved student population is essential, essential to fully engaging and preparing them for the 21st century,'' Mr. Chairman, which we know is so critical.

According to Dr. Roy Flores, who is the chancellor of Pima Community College, ''Our ability to increase minority graduates in science, technology, engineering and math degree programs will determine our relative position in the global economy.''

This amendment, Mr. Chairman, is all about keeping America globally competitive in this 21st century. I encourage all of my colleagues to support it.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

I just want to simply rise to congratulate my colleagues, both Mr. MCNERNEY as well as Ms. GIFFORDS, both leaders on the Science Committee on this issue, in advancing our Democratic innovative agenda.

This amendment will benefit Hispanic-serving institutions throughout our Nation to inspire more of our young people to seek careers in industries that will foster the growth in mathematics and science among primarily Hispanic-serving institutions.

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And I stand wholeheartedly behind this amendment. This will include over 10,000 students in my district who will directly benefit from this amendment. Let me just read some of the institutions in Queens and the Bronx, including Lehman College, Bronx Community College, Hostos Community College, LaGuardia Community College, Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology at LaGuardia Airport, and the College of Mount Saint Vincent. They are just a few of the colleges that will benefit from this amendment.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I wholeheartedly support it and ask my colleagues to support this amendment as well.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to support the McNerney-Giffords amendment. This amendment establishes a new competitive grants program specifically for Hispanic-Serving Institutions at the National Science Foundation.